

Numbers 21 - Thursday, October 28th, 2010

21:1 The king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South, heard that Israel was coming on the road to Atharim. Then he fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners.

- The Children of Israel are on their way into the Promised Land, and right out of the shoot, there up against a battle against King Arad.
- It's interesting to note that some of the Israelites are taken captive as prisoners by the Canaanite's in this battle for the Promised-Land.
- Isn't that how it is for us as well? There always seems to be a battle when it comes to entering in to the promises of God's Word.

2 So Israel made a vow to the LORD, and said, "If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities." 3 And the LORD listened to the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites, and they utterly destroyed them and their cities. So the name of that place was called Hormah.

- At first glance this may seem vindictive on the part of the Israelites, however, upon further examination, it's actually a righteous defense.
- It's important to understand that in the vow they make to the Lord, they ask not for any spoil, only for deliverance from their enemies.
- As one commentator wrote; "This was Israel's way of saying, 'we're not fighting this battle for our own profit, but for the glory of God.'"

- Also, notice how that they plead with the Lord to give the victory "over to them" in their battle against the King Arad of the Canaanites.
- So too, is this true when we too, receive from the Lord, Who gives us the victory over sin in our battle against the kingdom of darkness.

4 Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. 5 And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread."

- Now, as they make their way around the land of Edom, they once again become very discouraged, and once again begin to complain.
- This shouldn't come as any surprise. They were taught by the previous generation that this is what you do when the going gets rough.

"At mount Hor, Moses had seen his brother Aaron die, and now, all alone, he has to bear anew the contentions of the people; yet he was not alone, his God was with him. The people were getting weary of tent life, and of the inconveniences of perpetually moving, but they forgot their many mercies, and the great deliverances which the Lord had wrought for them. Fretting, groaning, and complaining are very easy, but they are ungrateful, unholy, and useless habits".

Charles Spurgeon

6 So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

- This is interesting because Moses, as he had prior, praying that the Lord be merciful to them is conspicuously absent from the narrative.
- Perhaps Moses simply did not have any time to intercede because of the suddenness in sending the serpents to smite and bite them.
- I want to suggest another possibility. The Lord's suddenness and Moses' silence seem to indicate that their sin was greater than before.

"In fact, they may be even acting worse than their fathers here. In eight previous passages ...the children of Israel are described as speaking against Moses. In those situations, Moses knew ...and the LORD knew ...they were really speaking against God - but the people were not brazen enough to do it directly. Now they are brazen enough, because it says the people spoke against God and against Moses!"

David Guzik, Calvary Chapel Santa Barbara

"What a weariness it is to read this repetition of the stale complaint! It is always the same old and cruel slander; but each time there is more sin in it, because it is committed against a longer experience of the divine faithfulness. How wretched a thing is discontent - it rails at the bread of heaven, and despises the clear crystal leaping from the rock. ... [in their discontentment] they acted like serpents in hissing at Moses, and now serpents are sent to punish them. God has many ways of chastising sinners. He who made Moses' rod a serpent, can also use a serpent as His rod to smite Israel. He will sting those who sting His servants."

Charles Spurgeon

7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

- Well, isn't this interesting. To their credit, the people repent and confess their sin of speaking against the Lord and ask Moses to pray.
- Of course, the snakes, with their fiery venom, are killing them left and right, so I suppose you could say that they are quite motivated.
- Be that as it may, Moses does pray, and ask the Lord to take away the serpents from the people so that they can be saved!

8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

- This is a most fascinating. All the Israelites had to do was simply look to the bronze serpent on the pole, and they would be saved.
- Perhaps by now, you already see the prophetic picture that's painted on the canvass of our text pointing to the person of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 45:22 Look to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. AMP

- This is such a powerful passage as it relates to the typology, that Jesus Himself references it in the most quoted verse in all of the Bible.

John 3:14-16 (14) Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, (15) that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. (16) "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. NIV

"It was 'like, curing like,' an uplifted serpent heals the mischief wrought by a serpent: by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead. The serpent on the pole was, as it were, executed by hanging on a tree, and so was the more lively type of the Crucified One, Who was made a curse for us. A look was demanded of all who were bitten: there was one command for princes and paupers: they must all look, and look in one direction, for no other remedy was provided. It was the duty of Moses to lift up the serpent, but he could do no more, he had no mystic power in his own person to heal the wounded: even thus, ministers are to us, they are as weak as other men in such matters."

Charles Spurgeon

THE SNAKE ON THE POLE	THE CHRIST ON THE CROSS
The serpent got Eve to look upon the tree.	Jesus would have us look upon a different tree.
Snakes paint for us a picture of sin.	Jesus died as payment for our sin.
Bronze is the metal of judgment.	Jesus took the judgment instead of us.
The bronze snake is put on the pole.	Jesus was judged for our sin, it put Him on the cross.
The snake was horizontal on a vertical pole.	Jesus a man (horizontal) restores us to God (vertical).
Seemed simply foolish to look at the pole.	Jesus dying on the cross looks foolish to most.
This was the only way to be healed.	Jesus is the only way to get to heaven.
It took faith in that hoped for, not yet seen.	Jesus is our faith, when we keep our eyes on Him.
It was fashioned into a symbol and an idol.	Jesus is made to be fashionable just a symbol.

2 Kings 18:4-6 4 He (Hezekiah) removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan.) 5 Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. 6 He held fast to the LORD and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses.

- As a side note, our modern day symbol for modern day medicine comes from this passage describing healing from a snake on a pole.

10 Now the children of Israel moved on and camped in Obboth. 11 And they journeyed from Obboth and camped at Ije Abarim, in the wilderness which is east of Moab, toward the sunrise. 12 From there they moved and camped in the Valley of Zered. 13 From there they moved and camped on the other side of the Arnon, which is in the wilderness that extends from the border of the Amorites; for the Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. 14 Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the LORD: "Waheb in Suphah, The brooks of the Arnon, 15 And the slope of the brooks That reaches to the dwelling of Ar, And lies on the border of Moab."

- Here the Israelites finally make their way to Moab on their long continuing journey to their final destination of the Promised Land.

- Notice we have a mention of the "Book of the Wars of the Lord." The question is; "why wasn't it included in the canon of scripture?"

- The short answer to this is that if this book was considered; "inspired," the Lord would have certainly saw to its inclusion in our Bibles.

16 From there they went to Beer, which is the well where the LORD said to Moses, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." 17 Then Israel sang this song: "Spring up, O well! All of you sing to it -- 18 The well the leaders sank, Dug by the nation's nobles, By the lawgiver, with their staves." And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah, 19 from Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to Bamoth, 20 and from Bamoth, in the valley that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah which looks down on the wasteland.

- As you might imagine, the Israelites are so overjoyed they sing for joy to the Lord, and as they do, the Lord provides them with water.

21 Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, 22 "Let me pass through your land. We will not turn aside into fields or vineyards; we will not drink water from wells. We will go by the King's Highway until we have passed through your territory." 23 But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his territory. So Sihon gathered all his people together and went out against Israel in the wilderness, and he came to Jahaz and fought against Israel. 24 Then Israel defeated him with the edge of the sword, and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the people of Ammon; for the border of the people of Ammon was fortified. 25 So Israel took all these cities, and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon and in all its villages. 26 For Heshbon was the city of Sihon king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and had taken all his land from his hand as far as the Arnon. 27 Therefore those who speak in proverbs say: "Come to Heshbon, let it be built; Let the city of Sihon be repaired. 28 "For fire went out from Heshbon, A flame from the city of Sihon; It consumed Ar of Moab, The lords of the heights of the Arnon. 29 Woe to you, Moab! You have perished, O people of Chemosh! He has given his sons as fugitives, And his daughters into captivity, To Sihon king of the Amorites. 30 "But we have shot at them; Heshbon has perished as far as Dibon. Then we laid waste as far as Nophah, Which reaches to Medeba." 31 Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites. 32 Then Moses sent to spy out Jazer; and they took its villages and drove out the Amorites who were there.

- This is what happened with the Edomites, except that when the Amorites attack them, God gives the Israelites the victory over them.

33 And they turned and went up by the way to Bashan. So Og king of Bashan went out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. 34 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Do not fear him, for I have delivered him into your hand, with all his people and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon." 35 So they defeated him, his sons, and all his people, until there was no survivor left him; and they took possession of his land.

- Here again, God delivers all of them into the hands of the Israelites, and just as God promised, they take possession of the land.

- I just wonder if the Israelites, as the recipients of God delivering on His promises, ever thought about the previous generation's unbelief.